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ABSTRACT

In recent years European textbook research has begun to examine the topics of ethnic minorities, multiculturalism, hostility to foreigners, and racism. Its task is not only to ask whether textbooks should present such topics but also how they should be presented. In addressing the issues, an important question to answer is whether the textbooks themselves--either consciously or unconsciously--inaccurately represent ethic groups and promote prejudices, stereotypes, or racist ideas. This paper suggests 10 categories to be used in making an analysis of textbook content and to identify the degree to which bias or prejudice is represented and promoted. The 10 categories are: (1) individual consideration of ethnic minorities; (2) reasons for migration; (3) information about their home country; (4) problems and disadvantages facing them in their new homeland; (5) results of and criticism of hostility to foreigners; (6) causes of hostility to foreigners or racial prejudice; (7) historical dimensions of the problem; (8) views of the minorities and social perspective taking; (9) assessment of a multi-cultural society; and (10) strategies for preventing and breaking down hostility towards foreigners and racism. (DB)

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PREJUDICE AND UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS

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Prejudice and underlying assumptions

The aims of classical textbook research have been to eliminate and expose errors, distortions, adverse images and prejudices in the textbooks of different nations. Nations and people who had formerly been at war with one another were in particular the target for prejudices and adverse images. Efforts to rid textbooks of these adverse images of ex-war enemies were possible to an extent and were facilitated by the fact that, in forming blocs during the East-West conflict, it was possible to turn former enemies into partners. This conflict, on the other hand, led to the creation of new adverse images, namely anti-communism and anti-imperialism. Just as the political revolution in the East, resulting from the downfall of "really existing Socialism", has rendered adverse images dominant internationally during the past forty years totally superfluous, it will also have a similar impact on the way adverse images will be dispensed with in respect to East-West relations.

Parallel to this tendency taking place on an international level (this will naturally not be the case everywhere, but nonetheless in the important area of East-West relations), research is concentrating increasingly on adverse images and discrimination towards ethnic and cultural minorities on a domestic level. Processes of international migration have led to multi-cultural societies in several European countries. The Council of Europe has in particular continually drawn attention to the fact that at the same time hostility towards foreigners is developing and in fact a new form of

racism is both noticeable and to an extent on the increase[2].

Textbook research, as usual lagging behind the sciences (in this case the social sciences), has also adopted the topics of ethnic minorities, a multi-cultural society, hostility to foreigners and racism. Its task is not only to ask whether but also how textbooks should present these themes. The question is whether textbooks themselves - either consciously or unconsciously - whether they themselves do not represent and promote prejudices, stereotypes or racist ideas. The answer to this question naturally depends on the categories of analysis and the criteria on which the evaluations are based[3]. Different standpoints in the reference sciences, in didactics and pedagogy provide different checklists for analysing texts. I would like to suggest 10 categories intended as guidelines, which I consider to be essential for carrying out a text-analysis appropriately (although they are not totally sufficient in themselves).

1. Individual consideration of ethnic minorities.
2. Reasons for migration.
3. Information about their home country.
4. Problems and disadvantages facing them in their new homeland (work, finding a home, school, everyday life).
5. Results of and criticism of hostility to foreigners and/or racial prejudices.
6. Causes of hostility to foreigners or racial prejudice (superiority and inferiority complexes, the need to find a scape-goat, political instrumentalization).

7. Historical dimensions of the problem.
8. Views of the minorities and social perspective taking.
9. Assessment of a multi-cultural society.
10. Strategies for preventing and breaking down hostility towards foreigners and racism[4].

This framework of categories is in its essence an outright criticism of prejudices and racism; even on this basis it still allows for controversial discussions.

1. It has meanwhile become standard practice in didactics to use a controversial and multi-perspective approach when presenting socially controversial subjects in textbooks. However, to what extent should those opposed to a multi-cultural society be allowed to have their own say in the matter? To what extent should the text remain undefined and open?

2. The drawbacks of a multi-cultural society, the prejudices, hostility and discrimination can be tackled by employing different teaching strategies. Preference will be given either to an 'anti-racist' or 'intercultural/multi-cultural' educational approach, depending on how widespread racism is believed to be[5]. While in anti-racist education, the struggle against a political structure in which power is unequally distributed between white people and coloured minorities is the central issue, multi-

cultural education focuses on the struggle against levels of consciousness which lead to intolerance and xenophobia. (If racism is not only based on a desire for power and sense of superiority, but also on a sense of inadequacy and a fear of being inferior, then the anti-racist approach could in fact have a counter-productive effect!).

3. What in fact is racism?[6] Is there a consensus of opinion among the sciences on this subject?. They are quick to agree initially: racism is any form of disadvantage incurred on the basis of skin colour. Latest research into racism takes this much further. Racism is not only evident in cruel instances of exclusion and overt discrimination but is also inherent in the more subtle and veiled forms of superior behaviour. There is even a form of racism which acts fully independent of conscious racist beliefs and appears as an unconscious mechanism of social selection or a social routine of disadvantages on the basis of skin colour. In order to analyse these subtle forms of racism in textbooks, subtle methods of analysis have been developed which include the visual presentation of minority groups and the problem of semantically loaded language. Criticism has been voiced against even presenting minority groups as victims of discrimination, since this would underrepresent the active role of minority groups. Even differentiating between "we" and "they" is seen as potentially breeding racism.[7]

The expansive use of the term racism sensitizes us on the one hand to forms of racism undetected until now, yet, on the other hand, there is the danger of this term becoming inflated with different meanings: if everything is racism, then in fact nothing is racism. Is emphasizing the point that minority groups are the victims of discrimination in itself a racist element? Is it not more an element of anti-racism? And is differentiating between "we" and "they" already insinuating a racist standpoint, or is this not just a matter of group identification, which in itself is socially indispensable. A sense of dominance and discrimination is only evoked by the special aspects of exclusion and debasement.

Textbook research is, however, not only limited to analysing prejudices and adverse images. It is also concerned with exposing and bringing to our attention deep-seated and one-sided patterns of perception as regards our awareness of history and politics. The collective term for this is "underlying assumptions". "Underlying assumptions" - the magic word of textbook research. Karl Jeismann proposed the following definition almost 10 years ago:

"Textbooks ..... adhere to a special approach which perceives other countries on the basis of the history of that country. Perceptions from this angle alone are regarded as absolute and as it were "natural" and constitute the deeper lying reason for distortions in understanding between different nations. Investigating such unconscious pre-suppositions - 'underlying assumptions' - is a new approach and poses a challenge

to textbook research. For, "underlying assumptions" can slip undetected into the image one has of one's own country and make this image into a norm for judging circumstances and processes in other countries".[8]

What Jeismann chose to formulate under the abstract collective term of "underlying assumptions" is known in history and the political sciences as an element of historical awareness and political culture or mentality. This implies in both cases a specific way of viewing and interpreting the world. Historical or political facts are in this respect not of primary interest, but the manner in which these facts are interpreted. Defeat or victory in war, successful or failed revolutions may be facts, but these facts allow for various interpretations and are remembered in different ways. It is the way in which they exist and have been absorbed into our consciousness which is decisive as to their influence on present or even future actions. This is similarly true with regard to state politics, political violence or economic crises: only expectations and assessments, interpretations based on our political awareness lead to certain responses. For instance, if by tradition there is little faith as to what the state can achieve, there will be less disappointment when nothing actually does occur, than when one has the image of an efficient government. Such fundamental patterns as these in one's awareness of history or politics are summarized in the term "underlying assumptions". Having been stimulated by research into political culture, I would like to suggest some differentiations of the term "underlying assumptions".[9]

1. National similarities are to be considered just as much in "underlying assumptions" as are ideological differences. "Underlying assumptions" of any one country are by no means completely uniform, but as a result of ideologically determined cultures also appear in different manifestations. There is only a small aspect of "underlying assumptions" which a nation has in common, and in which ideologies overlap. For example, certain "underlying assumptions" to be found in an Italian Christian-democratic textbook author place him closer to his German counterpart than to one of his communist colleagues. All Italian authors, however, will have a great deal in common with respect to their "underlying assumptions". This could, for instance, be a common suspicion that politicians and functionaries are corrupt, thus clearly separating them from their German colleagues regardless of their ideological convictions.

2. "Underlying assumptions" differ according to different individuals and groups. The question is, whether we are concerned with "underlying assumptions" within political and educational elites and experts or with those present in the general public.

3. It is essential to locate the sensitive spots of each individual political culture, since they are a decisive factor when dealing with specific topics as

to the degree of attention, resistance and openness which can be activated. The term "underlying" should not be automatically equated with something negative or threatening. In cases where key experiences of a country have been characterized by successful processes, both historically and politically ("Bill of Rights"), "underlying assumptions" can then no doubt develop which are not defamatory but have a positive effect on one's perception of oneself and others.

4. "Underlying assumptions" as patterns of how one sees oneself and the image one has of others are connected, but our knowledge of this connection is still sparse; extreme cases of adverse images have been concentrated on. A sense of insecurity and vulnerability lead to distorted ideas and images of others. These distortions need not necessarily produce adverse images. They can also create "positive stereotypes" as, for instance, in pro-Semitic or pro-American attitudes. However, even a self-assured sense of identity cannot guarantee that others will be perceived fairly, for even this can lead to blindness towards the problems of others.

5. "Underlying assumptions" vary a great deal in quality. "Underlying" does not per force mean unconscious and unconscious in turn does not always mean the same. My suggestion is to differentiate between the various stages of development on the cognitive, evaluating and emotive level and to ask: are "underlying assumptions" based more on ignorance

or are they in fact qualified ? Are other points of view evaluated more from an ego-, ethno- or Euro-centric stance or more with an open-mind? Finally, is the psychologically emotional aspect of "underlying assumptions" determined more by repression and fear or through one's consiousness and self-confidence.

6. "Underlying assumptions" are not inflexible. However, not all aspects can be altered to the same degree. It will be necessary to differentiate between waves of Zeitgeist, which have a short-term effect on people's political and historical awareness and revolutions in mentality regarding politics and history. The present wave of anti-Marxism and anti-Socialism seems to me to be an example of a wave of Zeitgeist, triggered off by "really disappearing Socialism". Reunification, in contrast, will certainly lead to a change in people's mentality.

I would like to exemplify how, by differentiating, it is possible to apply 'underlying assumptions' when dealing with problems, forming theses and for criticism in textbook research.

1. Ideologically differing "underlying assumptions" in the contents of textbooks can be demonstrated clearly by looking at how "hot" topics such as the peace-movement or a multi-cultural society are treated. Far more dramatic in nature was the polarizing effect of the political culture on the

debate of German-Polish textbook recommendations.

2. Textbook research must know whether a gap exists between the "underlying assumptions" of those 'producing' and those 'consuming' the texts. In extreme cases the gap is as wide as it was in former textbooks of State Socialism. However, there will always be incidences of a gap, even in democracies. For instance, is enough consideration given in Italian textbooks to the clientelistic mentality which exists, so as to correspond to reality?

3. One of the sensitive spots in the political and historical consciousness of many European countries is the fascist or authoritarian threat or the destruction of democracy. German and Italian fascism have bequeathed their countries with different burdens. What effect does this difference have on how fascism is presented in textbooks? The downfall of the Weimar Republic resulted in instability of traumatic proportions for German post-war democracy. How did this affect textbooks up to the 1970's and how after 40 years of democratic stability is this reflected today? To what extent did Franco's reign have a negative effect on contemporary Spanish textbooks and how do they treat the successful processes which have led to democracy?

4. On the basis of which "underlying assumptions" do western democracies hold their mutual perceptions? How is West German democracy portrayed in the textbooks of those countries which were once enemies

with Germany and are now allies or friends? What part does the holocaust play in the curricula and texts of these countries? How are former western model democracies presented nowadays in German textbooks? Which "underlying assumptions" lead to adverse images?

5. When referring to the different stages of development in "underlying assumptions", textbook research concentrates its criticism on such "underlying assumptions" which are based on ignorance, ethnocentric or nationalistic perspectives or a repression of the past.

6. The production of future textbooks in what was formerly the GDR will provide material for study as to the extent to which "underlying assumptions" and their influence can be altered.[10] The prolific nature of our term can once again be put to the test. The questions to be raised at this point are:

- which political culture will dominate in influencing how the historical course of "really disappearing Socialism" is interpreted?
- Which pattern of interpretation will dominate new textbooks?
- Will textbook authors also 'capture' the mentality and awareness of the people?
- Will there be evidence of a well-developed national consciousness which will enable a balance between national identity and European integration?

- What will be the reaction to the two key experiences of late - the downfall of the German type of state socialism and reunification - will they lead to new "underlying assumptions" in the future? And indeed; which old "underlying assumptions" will still influence the process of coming to terms with the past and provide the right guidelines for the present?

Like prejudices and adverse images,[11] "underlying assumptions" also have their function and are deeply rooted in our collective consciousnesses. They can only be altered very slowly - probably only as a result of new experiences. Even if revealing them does not render them totally ineffective, it will still be easier to predict their influence.

Questions for group discussions:

1. To what extent can textbooks contribute to preventing and reducing prejudices?

2. Which "underlying assumptions", highly different in character, influence the process of textbook development: from planning to their use in the classroom?

3. What "underlying assumptions" does the textbook critic share?

Footnotes:

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4. K.P.Fritzsche: Multikulturelle Gesellschaft - ein Thema deutscher Schulbücher? in: Internationale Schulbuchforschung 3/90

5. J.Banks and J.Lynch(eds): Multicultural Education in Western Societies, New York 1986, M. Hohmann and H.Reich (Hrsg.): Ein Europa für Mehrheiten und Minderheiten, Münster - New York 1989

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